
Gender Discrimination in Rowling's Harry Potter and Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings.

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When we are told that someone has been blessed with a baby, instead of asking whether it is perfectly normal or not, our question will be if it is a boy or a girl. The society we live in so preoccupied with gender that we have to know about the identity of the baby from the start. We are either born male or female but our gender is learned. From early age until we pass away society tells us how to behave, what is expected from us, and what kind of behavior is considered to be feminine or masculine. We learn our behavior from socialization agents such as our parents, peer groups, schools and from the media. In most widely used children's book, we find several gender differences. Males play a much bigger part in the stories, outnumbering females by a big ratio. The activities of males and females are different the males are mostly engaged in adventurous pursuits. Identity is shaped by the multiple experiences a person has in this world.

Sex is a biological trait while gender is culturally produced. Differences in gender are not something persons are born with rather these differences are culturally produced. The socialization starts right after we are born. Studies have shown that the parents treat boys and girls differently whether it is a matter of clothes, toys or books. Male characters are more active playing greater and roles adventurous while female characters are more passive and domestically oriented. Beliefs about women's roles in society are influenced by the fact that we rarely see a female superhero or a female person who makes it through exciting challenges and masters them. Parents, peers, school and media teach children gender roles they are supposed to assume and identify with, in fact they learn themselves about their positions as males or females within the expectations of society.

The Lord of the Rings is a fantastic and magically woven narrative of adventure, courage and friendship. Romance and mystique abound in the physical and spiritual journey about in the physical and spiritual journey that a small hobbit makes with a fellowship of eight other members of Middle Earth. Of course, this world, not unlike our own, suffers from greed, misused power, racial discrimination and war, etc. Gender spaces so obviously occupy the place that we can say that it is a world dominated by men. Male characters in these works seem to suggest powerful allegorical overtones on gender issue matters. The focus of this paper is to examine the complex depiction of friendship and the role of femininity in relation to masculinity. According to Sherrod (1987), who has studied friendship between men:

Our culture has traditionally viewed male friendship as embodying the ideals of comradeship and brotherhood. Men have buddies, pals, lifelong ties – bonds of unspoken, unspeakable commitment – the kind of friends for whom one would lay down one's life. (P-215)

The unequal representation of female characters and their power is no exception in this trilogy. Women are portrayed as inferior to male characters and are not represented proportionately. There are only three significant female characters: Arwen, Galadriel and Eowyn and the thing to be noticed is that not one of these women is part of the fellowship. Even their roles are also not significant one.

The trilogy is dominated by the male characters. The passive female characters reveals the mentality of the writer in the form of symbol and stereotype. The juxtaposition of Galadriel's characteristics suggests that masculinity and femininity are not clearly defined ways of being; there can be movement between male and female characteristics which can be admired, no matter whether a male or a female portrays them.

Eowyn, who is a part of the human race in The Middle Earth, represents the oppression of women that hegemonic masculinity endorses in restricting women to limited roles and expectations. Eowyn is though a strong woman but unfortunately being a woman she confronts the reality that, although she may have qualities of fearlessness and fighting abilities, will not be allowed the prestige and honour as given to the men: as she says;

All your words are but to say you are woman, and your part is in the house. But when the men have died in battle and honour, for the men will need it no more. But I am the House of Eorl and not a serving woman. I can ride and wield blade and I do not fear either pain or death.(FOTR 125)

In spite of having many masculine qualities Eowyn finds herself trapped in the cage, from where she wants to escape but being female she is not perceived or treated as equal. The portrayal of Galadriel and Eowyn serve to create disruptions in the way a reader considers female's complex nature as compare to man's dominating behavior. Eowyn, though could do all adventurous deed what a male can do, but she has to perform it in male garb being trapped in the limitations of the genre. Arwen's shadowy presence exists as Aragorn's love, more as an idea than as a developed character. She does not attain any real physical form and even plays no active part. She is only a motivation to Aragorn and her existence is important for him that he is not fighting for simple abstractions or out of lust of power. Rose cotton, the other female character is perhaps entirely unmentioned till the end of The Lord of The Rings. She is a hobbit with whom Sam had an affectionate relationship leading to marriage.

The gendering of spaces is one of the outstanding characteristics of *The Lord of the Rings*. Battlefield and equal participation is forbidden to women, except by leave of men who control their lives. An obvious explanation for this consistent tethering of female characters to their home-space would be an assertion that Tolkien wanted to procedure the novel this way that men travel and women stay home. Perhaps this discrimination is the result of traditions views and notions that the home is a safe space, while their exposure to the world is dangerous. Streets and public places are male domains where they can move freely but women should not go on these places for anything may happen to them to violate their physical well-being.

Tolkien's depiction of female's mobility to the restricted areas partly accounts for her disinclination to allow women freedom equal to man. The battlefield has historically been a male domain and Tolkien's choice of exclusions of women from the battlefield supports this traditional outlook. However brave and strong are the Tolkien's female characters, they are not allowed to participate in the war. Tolkien in fact is the one who sets up a world in which only males enter the battlefield. Eowyn, though represents a sort of exception in male's disguise she breaks the rules.

In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the issue of gendered discrimination has been debated since its very publication. It is obvious that there are limited female characters and moreover they are assigned very petty and limited roles women held to strict domesticity and non-interference in the active realm of the male world. A particular set of limitations has been placed upon women. The discrimination is obvious when we find women not moving beyond the carefully constructed boundaries of their home spaces except at the end of the series, when everything settled down by the males and no significant opportunity of their development remains. The whole trilogy is the story of war but female characters hardly play any role or participate in the war. They are kept aloof from the issue of war and taking the risk of entering the battlefield to confront evil.

Tolkien's female characters all lack the courage and valour that his male characters possess. Though Eowyn, at times, exceptionally emerges as the only fully-developed woman character. No female character receive explicit attention, though one can assume their presence. All seem too tethered in place, within the boundaries set for them. Doreen Massey has drawn attention to the ways in which the social construction of space affects gender identifications and relations. Central to much of her research is the argument that,

"From the symbolic meaning of spaces and places, the clearly gendered messages which they transmit, to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being. So, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is understood." (Massey179)

Thus, Tolkien's female characters are not given full freedom to challenge the significant considerations. They are not permitted independent mobility. The *Harry Potter* series is arguably the most popular children's phenomena in the recent decades and it is interesting to look at gender attitudes in the series with regards of socialization. Written by J.K. Rowling, both the book series and the movies are widely popular among people of all ages and of both genders and thus Rowling has become a household name. Rowling has decided to use initials rather than her full name; Joanne Rowling for her novel. She added the name Kathleen and used the initials J.K. Rowling. Why did she do all this? In fact she wanted to disguise her gender because her main target audience were young boys. She did not want them to shun her books because of her gender.

Harry Potter novels have often been criticized, perhaps due to the massive excitement they have elicited and even more for the commercial culture they have created. The effect of these series undoubtedly arouse many approaches like religion, gender roles and language, even politics and the hero story or the Bildungsroman quality. Rowling has not actually well represented the female characters in her series. By no means are they perfect even they have to act under the influence of male characters. Mainly the four women of various ages: Hermione Granger, Minerva McGonagall, Ginny Weasley and Fleur Delacour, deal differently to much an extent according to the behavior of those around them. Their stereotypical female role of housewife vary drastically from character to character.

Rowling has in fact written the female characters with the traditional view that they should always remain submissive and act according to the wish of male dominant society. They have no right to fight for their rights to be equal to men. People of Rowling's wizarding world do not celebrate their

achievements because they do not treat them as special and that is exactly what feminists in our modern society are fighting for. Rowling herself is not a part of the wizarding world. She is a part of our modern world where there are still stereotypical female roles and men rule the universe. So she has not portrayed as hard-core feminist and in no way a perfect one on the feminist side of the spectrum.

Several female characters are shown falling in love or being in love throughout the series but till the end they are unable to reveal freely or admit openly about their love due to the fear of society. Hermione loves Ron but she does not try to further her relationship with Ron and she therefore suffers in silence when Ron flaunts his relationship with Lavender. Before they act on their feelings Hermione goes through something that is extremely difficult for anyone to go through; the man she is in love with, leaves her Ron expects her to follow him but she can't. She feels devastated. Ron behaves exactly how a male behaves and reacts in such a situation blaming the woman for this frustration.

Again in the case of Professor McGonagall, it is the woman who has to sacrifice and suffer. She fall in love with a muggle, Dougal McGregor but realizing the fact that she will not be happy with him by hiding the reality of her life. She retreats her steps and decides not to marry him. Professor Minerva McGonagall is the Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts and head of Griffindor House, both of which are positions of authority. However the patriarchal society places many constraints on her.

Rowling has created Ginny's character very inconsistent with her personality. She has been shown strong, confident and flirt type of girl but after her marriage with Harry, she becomes completely submissive. It looks like Harry has complete control over her that's why she does not even suggest anything related to the naming of their children. Harry named their three children after the six important characters in his life. The three children are named James Sirius, Albus Severus, and Lily Luna. James is Harry's father, Sirius is Harry's Godfather, Albus is Harry's headmaster and Severus is also Harry's headmaster. Lily is Harry's mother and Luna is Harry's friend. Not one name of these six has any great emotional connection to Ginny.

Fleur delacour is another one of the female characters, Rowling has created. She is first presented in Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire as a student of Beauxbatons who becomes a Triwizard champion is a sign of great strength of wizarding ability as those is only one champion from each school. But she is represented as a very week one. She is the least successful of the four champions other three being males. Fleur fails to retrieve her sister, who is her hostage, from the bottom of the lake.

Molly Weasley, Ron's mother is another stereotypical female character and there is not particularly much that makes her break the mould when it comes to this stereotype. She is overbearing, nagging, constantly feeding people, she knits, cooks, and cleans. She is a housewife and does not have a career outside the home. She is anything but submissive to her husband and hardly go beyond the wish of her husband. As a traditional female, she finds happiness in her husband's desire as cares about her family very much.

Here the Rowling's intention of representing the women always in need of one or another support is quite obvious. Such societies have always been needed by the women to improve their condition. Thus, the long journey of women's life has suffered since ages gone and for ages to come. Mute and silent, she grasps her being and gropes her identity. Centuries have dispersed and still a persistent agony claims the life and soul of a woman. The isolation and insecurity that a woman experiences her a lonely island where she feels all alone in her struggle, yet she is not recognized as his equal.

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